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ABSTRACT

This module on corn shuck dolls is one of eight modules designed to provide instruction on authentic Blue Ridge Mountain crafts to adult basic education students at a low cost. Contents include notes on the history of the dolls; process used, including equipment and materials, as well as method described narratively and graphically; and the followup, where the student is told how to progress to higher levels of proficiency. The Fry readability level of this module is 2.5. A teacher's guide which lists resources for each module in the series is available separately (see Note). (MEK)

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SHARING THE ARTS OF THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS
CORN SHUCK DOLLS

Conducted By:

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PREFACE

"Sharing the Arts of the Blue Ridge Mountains" is written so you, the AGE student, can learn about mountain arts. There are eight modules. Each module tells about the history of one art. Each module tells how to make a useful item the way mountain craftsmen do.

Crafts used to be a way of life for mountain families. People in the mountains were secluded. Families had to make everything they used. Later, city people wanted to buy these items. A crafts market developed. The mountain people found they could enjoy making things and have an income.

Today many people like to make items. It is a pleasure to make things. People still like to buy handmade items. Thus, there is still a market for items that are interesting to make.

In writing these modules, about 30 artists and craftsmen were interviewed. The craftsmen and artists shared the way they created their crafts. Project staff also visited Hambidge Center at Rabun Gap, Georgia; Berea in Kentucky; and Pi Beta Phi Arrowmont School, Gatlinburg, Tennessee. These schools are three of the ones which teach mountain arts and crafts. They were established to teach the mountain people some of the dying crafts in the early 1900's.

Today these schools, as well as John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, North Carolina, and Penland Institute, Penland, North Carolina, have classes. Many vocational-technical schools also teach crafts. Junior colleges sometimes offer non-credit craft courses. The Cooperative Extension Service holds some craft classes. Later you may want to go to a class at one of these schools.

Bob Nichols of Helen, Georgia, did the art work for this project.

Mrs. Lenore Carnes was the special consultant for this module. This project could not have been written without her help. For this module, Mrs. Carnes created a basic corn shuck doll. She worked closely with project staff to develop instructions on how to make a corn shuck doll.

If you want to learn more about the Blue Ridge Mountain area or corn shuck dolls, your AGE teacher has a list of books and resources.

MRS. LENORE (CISSIE) CARNES,
Consultant



Mrs. Cissie Carnes makes a corn
shuck doll.

Mrs. Lenore Carnes, known as Cissie to her friends and family, came to the mountains of north Georgia when she was 9 years old. She grew up with the mountain culture and mountain crafts.

She is married to Olan Carnes. Mr. and Mrs. Carnes farm and raise most of the food for their family of six.

After seeing a corn shuck doll, Mrs. Carnes decided she would try to make them. Supplies were no problem since she had her own corn patch. She put to use the art training she had gotten from her mother, Mrs. Dorothy Capps. She developed a lot of different corn shuck characters. She has also combined cornshucks with pine cones and other natural items to make flowers, animals, and Christmas decorations.

Corn shuck dolls by Mrs. Carnes have been sold at the Craft Co-Op at Tallulah Falls and at the Fence Rail in Clayton.

I. ABOUT CORN SHUCK DOLLS

When the first settlers came to the Blue Ridge Mountains, they could bring few things with them. As they settled, they began to make new items from native materials.

Indians in the Blue Ridge area used corn to meet many needs. They used corn for food. They made moccasin-like socks from corn. Children had corn toys. Corn was used for religious masks and medicine. In their houses, the Indians used corn for roofs, insulation, and sleeping mats. The settlers learned to use corn in many of the same ways.

Today there are new uses for corn. Baby powder, dynamite, paper, wallboard, and charcoal are all made from corn. People have also used parts of the corn plant to weave chair seats and to make decorations, dolls, hats, and shoes. Today corn is mostly used as livestock feed.

Corn is still very important to mountain people. In season, corn patches dot the mountains. Later, craftsmen use the shucks to make dolls and other things.

In this module we will discuss how to make a corn shuck doll.

II. HOW TO MAKE CORN SHUCK DOLLS

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For the dolls you need the shucks from several ears of corn. The inside shucks are best to use since they are softer.

Dye a few of your shucks. Natural dyes from vegetables, fruits, and plants make good dye. If you do not know how to make natural dyes, "Rit" dye works well. Use two different colors. Dye a few shucks each color. When the shucks are dyed, let them dry. You now have natural shucks and two colors of shucks.

The items you need are:

1. Scissors
2. A small ruler
3. Small bowl of water
4. Several balls of cotton (tissue rolled in a ball will do)
5. A spool of thread
6. 2 colors of Rit dye
7. Elmer's glue
8. Corn silks
9. Corn shucks
10. Water colors or red and blue paint.

When working with corn shucks always keep them damp. This lets them bend. Soak the shucks in a small bowl of water a few minutes to get them damp.

Begin by making the arms. Cut three strips of the natural shuck 6 inches long and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide. Tie the strips together at one end with a piece of string. (Figure 1) Be sure to tie the string tight. Braid the three strips. Tie the other end. (Figure 2) Trim the ends to a point for the hands. (Figure 3)

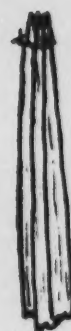


Figure 1

Lay the arms aside. Now start on the head. Cut a natural shuck at least 7 inches long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Make a 1-inch ball of cotton or tissue. Put the ball in the center of the shuck. Fold the shuck over the ball. Pull the sides toward the back. (Figure 4) Pull the shuck tight around the ball. Tie shucks together by wrapping a thread around "the neck" several times. Tie securely. (Figure 5)



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Place the arms you made earlier between the back and front pieces of shuck under the head. (Figure 6) Glue the arms to the inside of the shuck.

To make a female figure, put a small ball of cotton or tissue beneath the arms. Tie for a waist. (Figure 8) Remember to tie the string tightly.

Next cut five (5) or six (6) pieces of shuck for the skirt. Make each one $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and at least 2 inches wide.



Figure 6

Place these around the waist with the top of the shuck above the waist line.

(Figure 9)

Wrap thread around the waist.

Tie it securely. Trim the bottom of the skirt so it is even.

Now cut a colored shuck 3 inches wide and 4 inches long for an apron. Put the apron on the front of the doll. Gather the apron at the waist. Tie it tightly with thread. (Figure 10)

The top of the dress is another color of shuck. Cut two strips 5 inches long and 3/4 inches wide. Place the strips over the shoulders. Cross the strips in the front and back. Tie them at the waist. (Figure 11)

Cut a narrow strip of colored shuck. Tie it at the waist for a belt. Trim if you wish. Glue a ball of cotton under the skirt to hold it out.

Cut a small colored scarf. It should be shaped like Figure 12.

Glue corn silks on the head for hair.

Put the scarf on the head. Cross the strips under the chin. Wrap a piece of string around the neck to hold the ties in place. Now cut a narrow colored strip of shuck. Tie it around the neck.



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

This will cover the string and hold the scarf tight. (Figure 13) Trim if you wish.

Let the doll dry.

Paint on a face by dipping a pencil point in paint.

Some dolls have holes in the skirt or under the arms. To cover them, cut small pieces of shuck and glue them in place.

You can make a mop for your doll. Use a short stick with corn silks tied to it. (Figure 14) Put glue on the silks to hold them.

For a boy doll do not put the cotton under the arms. To make legs, cut two pieces of natural shuck. Cut these 6 to 8 inches long and 4 inches wide. Roll each piece of shuck. (Figure 15)

Place the rolls under the arms. Tie them tightly.

Cut two shucks $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and 3 inches wide. Put these on the sides of the doll. Overlap them in the front and back. (Figure 16) Tie these in place at the waist. Now, fold the shuck to cover the roll. Tie it at the bottom of the roll. (Figure 17) Cut a small strip of shuck. Tie it around the "ankle" to cover the thread.

Now cut two strips 5 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide. Place these over the shoulder.



Figure 10

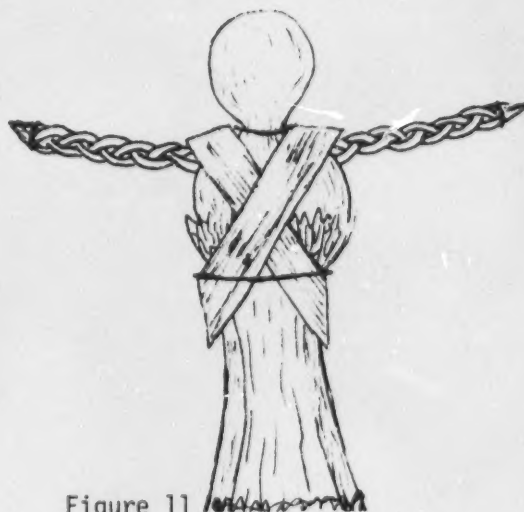


Figure 11

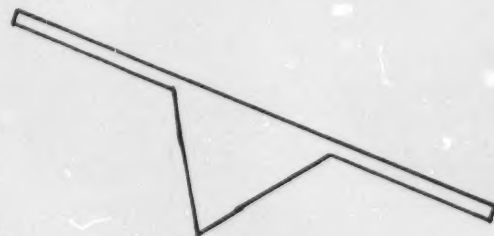


Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

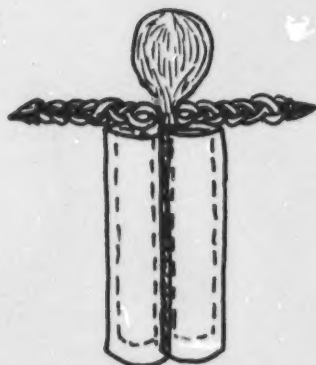


Figure 16

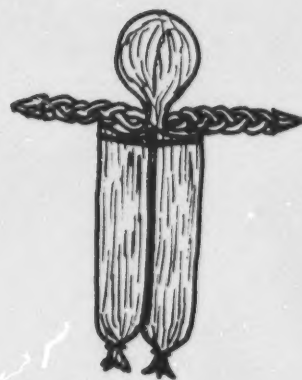


Figure 17

Tie them at the waist. (Figure 11) Cover the string with a narrow strip of corn shuck at the waist.

Add short shucks for the hair.

III. WHAT NEXT?

You now know about a basic shuck doll.

You may want to try other ways to make these dolls. Some are made with wire frames wrapped with shucks. Rolled arms can be used instead of braided ones. Some dolls have fabric clothes and yarn hair. Corn cobs can be the body or head.

Christmas angels and other decorations can be made with shucks. Remember when working with shucks to keep them damp. Then, let your imagination be your guide.

You may want to read some other books about corn shucks crafts. Your Adult Education teacher has a list of books and resources.

Places to get more information on shuck creations:

- Adult Education teacher
- Local Cooperative Extension Service
- Library